

## Opportunities and Challenges for Community Based Ecotourism Development: The Case of Alatish National Park; Northwest Ethiopia

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### Abstract

Contrary to traditional forms of tourism such as mass tourism, ecotourism has widely been recognized as an economic diversification and developmental tool, and an appropriate approach for conservation of natural resources for destinations with tourism heritage possessions as it provides protection and economic incentives. The aim of this study is to assess opportunities and challenges for community-based ecotourism development. A mixed research approach was devised and a cross-sectional research design was used. Tools of primary data collection were questionnaires, focus group discussions, interviews and observation checklists. Secondary data were collected from related articles, research and documents obtained from offices. Quantitative data was computed using SPSS version 16.0. The findings revealed that opportunities for community-based ecotourism development are key historical and cultural attractions in the park's vicinity, undifferentiated geological features with diversity of wildlife, the potential to develop cross-border tourism, potential benefits of ecotourism for local employment and an increase in global demands for ecotourism. Challenges for community-based ecotourism development are global warming and desert expansion, habitat depletion and degradation of natural resources, and diseases like malaria. Plus, a lack of basic infrastructural development such as roads, electricity, telecommunications, accommodation facilities, stakeholder collaboration, promotion and marketing, and human and financial resources are in a poor condition to meet the satisfaction of tourists and locals. *The main conclusion drawn from the study is that if properly planned and managed, the park has the potentials for ecotourism development as well as cross-border tourism since Alatish is trans-national park sharing boundaries with Dinder National Park of Sudan, and hence, tourists can get experiences from natural attractions and cultural manifestations of both Ethiopia and Sudan.*

**Keywords:** *community-based ecotourism, opportunities, challenges, Alatish National Park*

### Introduction

Contrary to conventional tourism, ecotourism has widely been promoted as an economic diversification and development tool, and an appropriate means for conservation of natural resources for destinations with tourism heritage possessions as it provides conservation and economic benefits (Charnley, 2005). Though Africa is noted for untapped tourism potential, its underdeveloped tourism sector is attracting only 5.1 % of the total tourist arrivals in the world

(UNWTO, 2013). Of this minimum share of tourism, a considerable proportion of visitor arrivals are taken by South Africa and Northern African countries (Kiringe & Okello, 2006).

The situation in Ethiopia is even worse; it shares only 0.9% of Africa's total tourist arrivals (UNWTO, 2012). On the one hand, its tourism potential is diversified because of natural attractions that include some of the highest and lowest places in Africa along with immense wildlife of which some are endemic, fascinating historical traditions, cultural monuments of ancient and medieval periods, mosaics of peoples from about 80 nations and nationalities, and festivals and relics of the Ethiopian Orthodox that open a window on the authentic world of the oldest civilization. In addition, the country is relatively peaceful, and its people are hospitable towards guests (Walle, 2010). Despite the fact that Ethiopia is endowed with various cultural and natural attractions with high aesthetic values of which ten picturesque cultural and one natural outstanding heritage attractions are registered by United Nations Educational Science and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Sites and being the first in Africa to have the highest number of World Heritage Sites, the country is one of the least to benefit from the tourism industry in Africa.

According to Young (2012), Ethiopia has 21 national parks, 20 controlled hunting areas, 4 biosphere reserves, 80 national priority forest areas, 2 wildlife sanctuaries, and botanical gardens with unique wildlife, and marvelous topographic land features accompanied by cultural manifestations that are compatible for ecotourism development and wildlife conservation. The loss of such diversified tourism resources could detrimentally affect community-based ecotourism development and diversification of wildlife. Analogous to this, due to the difficulties of implementing community-based ecotourism in practice, the expected amount of return could not be achieved. Wildlife, which is a pillar for ecotourism development in many national parks, is under threat from human encroachment, poaching for subsistence and commercial purposes, habitat degradation due to deforestation, encroachment of incompatible land uses, and uncontrolled fires that create ever increasing human-wildlife conflicts (Tefera, 2011).

Experiences show that many tourists come to Ethiopia mainly for the historic route and the tribal communities of the Omo Valley. The trend of visiting destinations, especially new national parks, is very limited in Ethiopia. Having recognized the significance of Alatish National Park from the point of wildlife diversity, recreational and economic values, national and international significance in acting as a green belt in combating the expansion of the Sahara and Sahel desertification in the region, its potential for ecotourism development and wildlife conservation was established in 2006 with declaration number 38/2006 (Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority, 2012).

Alatish National Park, found in Quara Wereda and near Dinder National Park in Sudan, is an ideal site for an ecological corridor to wildlife conservation, cross border tourism and ecotourism. Even though the park is rich in natural beauty, diversity of fauna and flora as well as cultural and historical heritages in its vicinity, it is rarely visited by tourists. Why is this so? This research tries to investigate the opportunities and challenges of community-based ecotourism development in Alatish, and identify why ecotourism has not been developed in spite of amalgamations of so many attractions and possibilities.

There have been some valuable studies conducted at Alatish National Park. For instance, Hailu Menale Wassie (2011) studied the potentials and challenges of Alatish and Dinder National Parks for implementing trans-boundary park cooperation, while Mengesha and Bekele (2008) investigated the diversity and relative abundance of birds of Alatish National Park. However, none of these studies provided a portrait on the subject of the development of community-based ecotourism.

The objective of this study has been to assess the opportunities and challenges of community-based ecotourism development.

## Methods and Materials

### Location

Alatish National Park (Figure 1), with an area of 2665.7 km<sup>2</sup> and located at 11°47' N and 12°21' E, shares its boundaries to the south with the Benishangul-Gumuz Region, to the west with Dinder National Park in Sudan, and is 1080 km from Addis Ababa and 330 km from the historic town of Gondar. Its rainfall ranges between 500-1500 mm (Amhara National Regional State Culture Tourism and Parks Development Bureau, 2009).

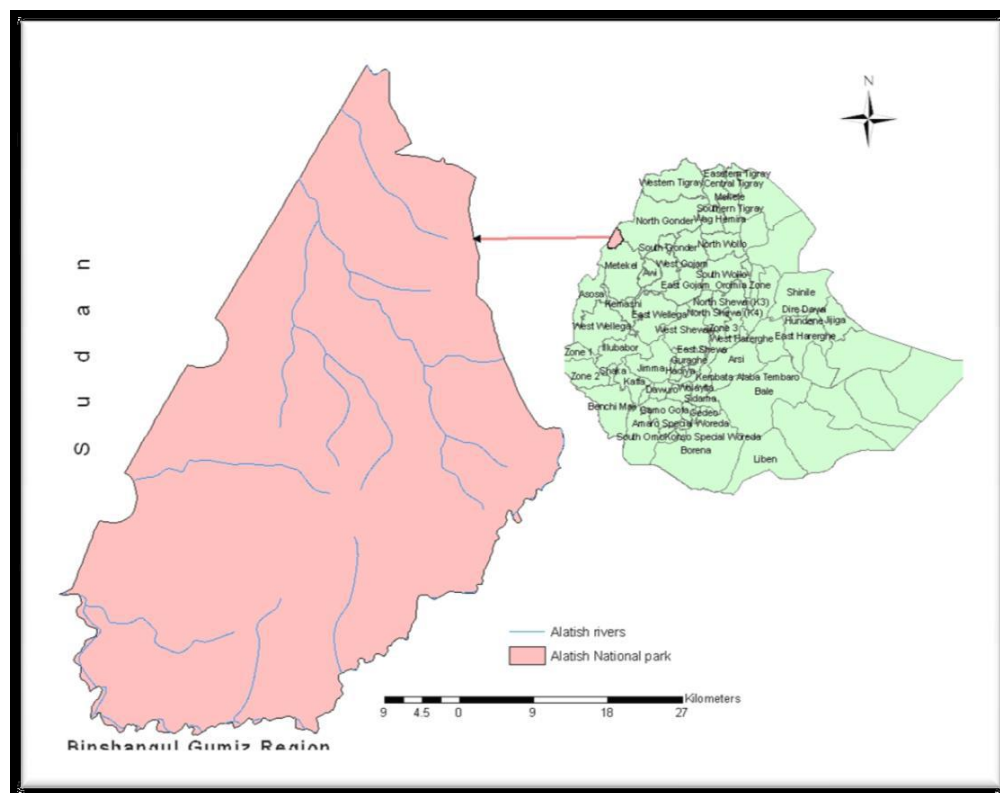


Figure 1. Map of the Alatish National Park, area of study (Alatish National Park Office, 2008)

### Study Design

A mixed method research approach was employed as it provides more comprehensive answers to research questions that go beyond overcoming the limitations of a single approach

(Creswell, 2003). A cross-sectional study design, i.e. investigations and data collection, has been undertaken simultaneously, which is best suited to study existing situations, problems and phenomenon.

### **Sources of Data**

To attain the significant contribution of the effective use of a variety of data sources for data triangulation, both primary and secondary sources of data have been used to collect the required information for this particular study. Primary sources of data include questionnaire, focus group discussion and key informant interview methods as well as personal observations. In addition, relevant scientific journals and academic articles, published and unpublished materials describing the park, office reports, documents from park offices, culture and tourism offices, the Ethiopian Environmental Protection Authority, and the wildlife conservation authority were the major sources of secondary data.

### **Data Gathering Tools - Key Informant Interviews**

Structured and semi-structured interviews were undertaken with two park officials, one culture and tourism expert, and one natural resource expert. A focus group discussion incorporated 6 informants - one park expert, one natural resources management employee, two scouts, one local representative, and one elder. Plus, questionnaires were organized in the form of a Likert scale and some open-ended items for both local and tourism experts.

### **Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

Five kebeles found near buffer zones of the park (Bambuha, Gelegu, Mahadid, Diza Gumuz Wuha, and Bermil Terara) with a total number of households, 802, 613, 431, 425 and 575 respectively, were selected (Finance and Economic Development Bureau of Amhara Regional State, 2007). The total sample size was determined using the Israel formula (1992).

$$n = N / 1 + N(e)^2$$

Where N = the total population that will be studied, n = the required sample size, e = the precision level which is  $\pm 5\%$ , and the confidence level is 95% at  $P = \pm 5$  (maximum variability). Therefore, the sample size for five kebeles,  $n = 167$ . In this way, 167 sample households were identified. A random systematic sampling method was employed to ensure the representativeness of the study population (Creswell, 2003). To do so, the first household was randomly selected, and thereafter, every tenth household was visited. To determine the sample size of each kebele from the total sample size of 167 respondents, a percentage (ratio)(p) was calculated as total sample size (n) divided by total number of households (study population) (N) (Endaweke, 2011 in Berhanu & Teshome, 2018). Mathematically, this is expressed as  $p = 167/2846 = 0.058$ . The sample size for Gelegu is  $802 \times 0.058 = 46.5 \approx 47$ ; for Bambuha,  $613 \times 0.058 = 35.5 \approx 36$ ; for Mahadid  $n = 431 \times 0.058 = 24.9 \approx 25$ ; for Diza Gumuz Wuha  $n = 425 \times 0.058 = 24.6 \approx 25$ ; and for Bermil Terara  $n = 575 \times 0.058 = 33$ .

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was undertaken using both quantitative and qualitative methods. For the quantitative data analysis, the data was gathered using the questionnaire that first arranged and organized in tables and calculated frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. In addition to the SPSS version 16.0, MS-Excel was employed for designing charts and graphs (bar and pie charts) to show the results.

Narration and descriptions were employed in the case of the qualitative data analysis. Data collected through interviews, focus group discussions and observations were analyzed systematically by condensing and summarizing information.

## **Ethical Considerations**

While undertaking interviews and focus group discussions, the full consent of each person being selected for interviews and FGDs was first asked kindly. The objective of the study was expressed in brief. Every participant was informed that the aim of the study was not to blame anybody, but rather to collect relevant information pertaining to issues under investigation, and that they could access the final report of the research.

## **Results and Discussions**

### **Opportunities for Community-Based Ecotourism Development**

**Abundance of potential tourism resources of the region (cultural and natural).** Statistical data results of the ecotourism potential analysis of tourism experts indicated that Alatish National Park has a diverse range of geographic features: gorges, cliffs, rock formations, watercourses /streams, soils, and landforms (mean = 4.44, std. deviation = .527); a rich history and culture such as historic villages, burial grounds, and indigenous sacred sites (mean = 4.11, std. deviation = .333), and an abundance and variety of indigenous fauna and floras (mean = 4.56, std. deviation = .527).

**Cultural resource attraction in the vicinities of Alatish National Park.** There are many historically and culturally important potential tourist attractions near Alatish National Park. Among these are Tewedros's birthplace (Tewedros Ketema), Emerior Tewedros' cave, the baobab tree of Haile Sellasie, the cemetery sites of Abraham Deboch and Moges Asigidom, Mahibere Silassie Monastery, the town of Metema Yohaness, churches and monasteries, such as Diza Mariyam, Tekilehayimanot Washa, and the Monastery of Wefta Giyogis Chergie Maryam. Since ecotourism is purposeful travel to undisturbed natural areas with the aim of studying the natural and cultural resources in and around protected areas while improving conservation of such resources, the availability of potential cultural attractions could diversify the experiences of visitors and elongate their length of stay.

***The birthplace of Emperor Tewedros II.*** Tewedros Ketema, located about 25 km east of the park, is a village where the most visionary founder of modern Ethiopian civilization and glorious leader called King Tewedros II was born in 1818 to Ato Hailu and Emmete Atitegeb. The

village has the historical sites of Chergie Mariam where the Emperor was baptized and Tewodros Cave (Tewedros *Washa*) where the emperor spent his time as a bandit. According to local informants, this natural cave has water inside, was manmade, and has holes used to shoot enemies. This historical site is an ideal tourism attraction for historical researchers and tourists.

***Mahibere Silassie Andinet Monastery.*** According to religious fathers, the Mahibere-Silassie Andinet Monastery (Figure 2) was established during Abirha We Atsibeha in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century. It is located 121 km from Gondar City, and 23 km from Derek Abay, a village on the Azezo-Metema Road, and it takes three hours on foot to cover the 23 km from the main road to the monastery. After a two hours trip, there is a gate called the *Gizit ber* (Command Gate) after which walking is permitted only with bare feet. Females shall not go beyond here, and any packed food and beverages are strictly forbidden. It is here that Emperor Tewodros II attended his education on religion, history and wisdom. Precious church treasures of ancient religious and historic manuscripts can be found in the monastery (Alatish National Park Office, 2008).



Figure 2. Left. Mahibere-Silassie Andinet Monastery; Middle. Gizit Ber; Right. Emperor Tewodros II Cave (National Park Office, 2008)

***Mettema Yohanis.*** This is a small historic town named by emperor Yohannes IV, and located in the North West of the country near the Ethio-Sudan border and 182 km from Gondar City. It is here where King Yohanis IV was wounded by Dervish Mahadist of Sudan in 1889 at the battle of Mettema. According to local elders, near Mettema Yohanis, there is holy water called *yemariyam wuha* (Saint of St. Virgin Mary) that emanated from the bottom of the mountain when Yohanis IV prayed to God before his death (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Left. Plaque for Emperor Yohannes IV; Middle. Yohanne's Mountain; Right. Tekilehavmanot Washa (National Park Office, 2008)



***Tekile Hayiamnot Washa.*** According to local elders, this cave has been used as not only a secret place where many church treasures, including Tekile Hayimanot's Ark of the Covenant, were hidden from Mahadist of Sudan's (Derivish) attack for five years (1888-1893), but also where mass and other church services have been undertaken during difficult times.

***Cemetery site of Abrham Deboch and Moges Asgidom.*** Ethiopia's gallant patriots Abrham Deboch and Moges Asgidom (Figure 4) were fighting for the sovereignty of Ethiopia and threw bombs that wounded the Viceroy Graziani and some thirty of his colleagues at Genet Leul Palace in 1937. They left Addis and tried to escape to Sudan via Tewedros Ketema, Quara. Unfortunately, they were seized by the Agew people of Bambuha Kebele, the adjacent area to the park, and presented to an Italian war leader named Bermundy of Saliya (*Tewedros Ketema*). Bemundy sentenced the two patriots to be crucified and buried at a village called Daza. In 1941, after Emperor Haile Sellassie I had been returned, the skeletons of the patriots were relocated to Addis Ababa. The cemetery site of the two heroic patriots is 25 km from the park and surrounded by stone.

***Baobab hewn tree cave of Emperor Haileselassie I.*** During Italian aggression, the emperor was in exile in England for five years. After the Italian evacuation, the emperor was returned to his homeland country via Sudan and took a rest for one week in a tree called a baobab (*Adansonia digitata*) hewn cave palace at Omedla near the Ethio-Sudan border. According to local informants, this tree palace was carved by the Gumuz community and can accommodate about 10 people. The name Omedela was also given to the former national police football club to memorialize the site.



Figure 4. Left. Baobab hewn tree palace; Right. Former cemetery of Abrham Deboch and Moges Asgidom (National Park Office, 2008)

***Intangible cultural manifestations.*** Alatish National Park is surrounded by the ethnic communities of Agew, Gumuz, Datsen, Amhara, and Qemant with their fascinating traditional cultures, linguistic compositions, dances, and religious festivities. In addition, the natural resource utilization of these cultures are the most striking social entities of Alatish National Park and its vicinities (Marye, n.d.).

**The potential to develop cross-border tourism for trans-boundary cooperation.** Due to the fact that both Dinder and Alatish National Parks have similar climatic patterns, topographic landscape, fauna and flora composition, common rivers of Alatish, Ayima and Gelegu, as well as the common tribal communities of Gumuz, the area is ideal for developing border tourism where tourists can get experiences from the natural attractions and cultural manifestations of Ethiopia and Sudan. This type of tourism is a tool to develop cross-border cooperation in tourism, to promote cultural and ecological balance and integrity, and to formulate common policies for use and conservation on both sides of a border (Timothy, 1999). Trans-boundary cooperation has the potential of contributing to the protection of migratory species, water bodies, and scenic landscapes that cross boundaries, of reducing the over-exploitation of resources on one side of a border, as well as of creating peace and stability to mitigate the illicit traffic of antiquities and other precious cultural treasures.

Besides cross-border tourism, Alatish National Park, being located in between the historic town of Gondar, the marvelous and spectacular Semen Mountain National Park and Dinder National Park of Sudan of which the former two destinations of Ethiopia are registered as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the latter is a UNESCO Biosphere Site, has the opportunity to be visited by visitors of other popular destinations.

**Increased global demand for ecotourism.** Nature-based tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors worldwide. It depends on the conservation of natural landscapes and wildlife, so that using ecosystems in this way can jointly promote human well-being and biodiversity conservation if well managed. The political and social stability of Ethiopia is accompanied by smiling as well as welcoming faces in general, and the region in particular has the potential of motivating tourists to visit the park and cultural manifestations in its vicinity. Responses from tourism experts indicated that the park has the potential for catching the attention of international and domestic researchers in the field of biology, medicine and pharmacology, ornithology, zoology, geology, natural resource management and/or conservation, and others who want to study rodent species, snake types, and fishery and aquatic species.

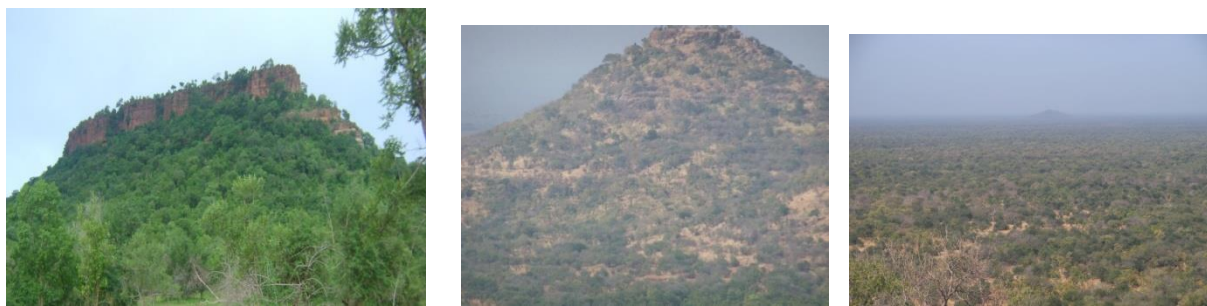
According to Dolnicar (2006), there is a growth of special interest in ecotourism that involves learning-while-travelling, such as wildlife viewing, attending festivals, cultural appreciation and nature study which are triggered by advances in global communication and information technology. Among wealthier societies at any rate, many people are now getting access to a huge volume of information about protected areas and travel options through the Internet and other communication technologies.

**The potential benefit of ecotourism for employment opportunity.** Interview results indicated that the establishment of the park gives both permanent and temporal employment benefits, road access from Gelegu to Mehadid then to Marwuha, Bermil as well as from Bemure to Bambuha, and a water supply to locals at Mahadid Kebele. The community is employed whenever there is construction of roads and water supply, and scouts are selected from local



communities. More importantly, with bright hope, the community will gain benefits by participating in guiding, renting pack animals, and socio-cultural exchanges with visitors provided that the community-based ecotourism is well developed in the region. Equally important, if ecotourism is developed, basic infrastructure for health centers, schools, the water supply, telecommunications and road access will be furnished to the community.

**Natural attractions of the park.** Topographic features of Alatish National Park are dominated by a plain interrupted by some hills (viewpoints), rivers, streams and gorges. The major viewpoints of the park are Amtish, Amrakuba, Mulugeta Mountain (Figure 5), Negil, Amdok Twin Mountain, Bermil, Tsequa, Almetani and Dimir of which Almetani (about 900 m above sea level) is the highest place, and Qeruba is the lowest place.



*Figure 5. Left. Amdok; Middle. Mulugeta Mountain; Right. Flat plain of Alatish (National Park Office, 2008)*

**Water resources of Alatish National Park.** In terms of water resources endowment, Alatish National Park is located in the Blue Nile drainage basin of Ethiopia, and the Eastern part of the Blue Nile and Gilgel-Abbay sub-drainage basin. The major sub-drainage basins in the Quara woreda are: the Shinfa, Ayima Drainage Basins, or Rahad and Dinder drainage basins respectively in Sudan, and the Gelegu River (GMP, 2009).

### **Existing Challenges for Community-Based Ecotourism Development**

The challenges related to ecotourism development are roads (mean = 1.67, std.dev = .500), tele communications (mean = 1.56, std.dev = .5287), shopping and hotels (mean = 1.33, std.dev = .500), finance (mean = 1.77, std.dev = .667), health facilities (mean = 2.00, std.dev = .500), sewage treatment (mean = 1.78, std.dev = .441) and lack of promotion and marketing. Even though Alatish National Park acts as a green belt in combating desert expansion and is located between the famous World Heritage Sites of the Semein Mountains National Park and the royal enclosure of Gondar as well as the Dinder National Park of Sudan, it lacks appropriate marketing and promotion (mean = 2.00, std.dev = .886). A study was conducted by Eshetie (2012) regarding potentials, challenges and opportunities for community-based ecotourism development in the national parks of Ethiopia. In the case of Borena Saynt National Park, South Wello, Ethiopia, the findings are inconsistent with the results of Alatish National Park.

**Global warming, desertification and diseases.** The diverse impact of global warming, desertification and diseases in wildlife is extreme to Alatish and its vicinity due to the Sahara and Sahel Desert expansion, which also impedes ecotourism development since ecotourism largely depends on the natural beauty, fauna and flora of a destination.

Equally important, there are habitat depletion and degradation of natural resources. These include recurrent fires (mean = 4.51), hunting (mean = 4.45), unwise utilization of fishing, water stress especially during dry season (mean = 4.45), migration of birds and mammals (mean = 4.49) to Dinder National Park of Sudan, and human-wildlife conflict (mean = 4.29). Other compelling challenges are nature based constraints such as global warming causing high temperatures, desert expansion, and diseases like malaria.

**Poor access to road transportation and electricity.** The absence of all-weather roads to Gelegu Town not only affects ecotourism development but also other socio-economic activities of trade and agricultural investment in the region. In addition, there are inadequate public and private transportation services especially from Gendawuha, the capital of Mettema, to Gelegu, the capital of Quara, since there are difficulties for direct transport between the two towns. For instance, the researcher used three types of vehicles, which included from Gendawuha to Shinfa the use of a normal bus, from Shinfa to Dubaba the use of an Isuzu offering people as cargo, and from Dubaba to Gelegu by a minibus, to cover 132 km, and the road is not asphalted. In addition, the park is about 40 km from Gelegu Town, and the road is very difficult even in the dry season and impossible to travel during muddy summer times.

Regarding the electricity supply, there is recurring on-off power in Gelegu Town. According to local informants and personal observation, sometimes, the power is off for more than a week.

**Tele-communication facilities.** The respondents shared that there is no telecommunication service at kebeles of Quara Wereda other than Gelegu Town. There is only one wireless telephone in each kebele said local informants. Personal observation and key informant interview results indicated that even in Gelegu Town the network of telecommunication is irregular and there is almost no internet facility in the town. Statistical data of tourism experts also indicate similar results for very poor telecommunication facilities (mean = 1.56, std. deviation = .527).

**Accommodation, shopping and health facilities.** With regard to accommodation facilities, personal observation results indicated that there are poor provisions for food and beverages, and almost no existence of public toilets and a waste disposal system in Gelegu Town. Concerning shopping, there is no adequate shopping. However, there are markets at buffer zones of the park near Bermil Kebele with souvenirs that fascinate visitors. Regarding banks and postal offices in Gelegu, there is only one Commercial Bank of Ethiopia and no post office. Health

facilities are also poor in the town, and patients take medical treatment either in Gendawuha or Gondar.

**Human resource problems.** Interview results with park officials indicated that there are only 31 scouts, which is not enough to keep and monitor the park. To manage the park effectively, there should be at least 100 scouts, along with one marketing and promotion expert, one natural resource management expert and two additional wildlife experts. In line with human resources of the park, responses in interview results revealed that there are no plant and animal science professionals who are in charge of monitoring the health of at least the major animal and plant species and no inventories have been undertaken with the exception of some researchers who conducted a study on some species such as rodents and birds.

**Lack of stakeholders' cooperation and integration.** As per the results of interview and focused group discussions, there is no good integration between stakeholders and the park office. For instance, the buffer zone of the park is managed by natural resource management without collaboration with the park office. In addition, according to the interviewees, justice and police officers evaluate some criminals or illegal activities of hunting, fishing and other unsustainable resource utilization as minor cases, and sometimes, they leave the case without any penalties. In line with this, the park office has limited the capacity to enforce regulations of the park resources as indicated by the tourism expert SPSS result (mean = 2.44, std. deviation = .882).

**Inadequate financial allocation.** Conservation of wildlife and park management is an expensive task, and a lack of adequate financial resources for such activities is one of the most profound difficulties facing park managers. Tourism experts reported that the financial allocation of the park is not sufficient, which has resulted in few management and conservation activities, and a lack of equipment for the park, i.e. the latest GPS, video-cameras, and gun materials for scouts.

### **Conclusions**

The results of the study demonstrated that the existing challenges for community-based ecotourism development in Alatish National Park are poor basic infrastructure and facilities such as roads, electricity, telecommunications, accommodations, health institutions, banking and shopping services to attract prospective tourists to the region. Other constraints for community-based ecotourism development are a lack of government body cooperation and integration, a lack of finances which results in inadequate promotion and marketing activities, an insufficient number of skilled staff, and an inability to manage tourism resources. The study also indicated that natural challenges such as global warming and its effects like extreme climatic variation of high temperature and excessive rainfall, as well as water stress and diseases like malaria, are threats for community-based ecotourism development.

The study illustrated that Alatish National Park, being rich in a variety and abundance of fauna and flora, striking topographic features, and rivers, as well as the vicinity's cultural attractions and ethnic groups, make it an ideal place for wildlife conservation and community-based ecotourism development. Generally, the area has significant potential in terms of biodiversity conservation (ecology), tourism and recreation, scientific research and education, and social and economic values.

In addition, opportunities to develop community-based ecotourism are the increasing global demand for ecotourism, the potential of the Alatish National Park to develop cross-border tourism or trans-boundary cooperation, and potential benefits of ecotourism for local employment opportunities. Most importantly, Alatish National Park is the only natural barrier that acts as a guard or green belt in preventing the expansion of the Sahara and Sahel Deserts from the adjoining Sudan region so that conservation of the park is a must.

### **Recommendations**

- To mitigate human caused threats for wildlife survival, there should be an evident need for biodiversity conservation to be formally addressed as an issue at all levels of society. Education and training programs could be given at schools, clubs and associations, such as youth associations, environmental association clubs, mini-media clubs at schools and farmers associations and at religious places to encourage dedication towards conservation, raise consciousness of the essential role of wildlife in the function of the ecosystem, and ecotourism's ethical and economic values, as well as its recreational and aesthetic significances, and the role of Alatish National Park as a guard or green belt in combating the expansion of Sahara and Sahel Deserts to the region.
- One of the most devastating factors for wildlife and habitat destruction is the impact of nomads from neighboring countries, in particular the Felata of Nigeriya, Minamir of Eritrea and Rubtan of Kenya with their huge amounts of cattle that excessively depend on the natural resources of the park, which puts the park in jeopardy. So, the federal government should take measures through diplomacy to evacuate these nomads from the park since this action is beyond the capacity of the park office.
- Artificial ponds and dams should be constructed at different sites of the park to retain water in the dry season and reduce daily and seasonal migration of wild animals, especially in the northern part of the park at Amjale and the southern part of the park at Ayibeza, Yelkuk, Bayiwa and Tsequa that are sites where abundant wildlife including elephants is found.
- To avoid clashes over policies and programs, there should be integration and collaboration among government bodies and other stakeholders. For example, the adverse effects of settlement and investment programs on the environment and natural resources should be taken into consideration, and feasibility studies related to adverse impacts on the national park should be conducted in a holistic manner among natural resource conservation and land administration, park office management, and culture and tourism of host communities, then possible reduction mechanisms prior to the commencement of programs should be forwarded.

- In order to develop community-based ecotourism in Alatish National Park and its vicinity, basic infrastructure and facilities should be developed that is compatible with wildlife and the natural ecosystem. More importantly, parallel with ecotourism development and since the region is famous for agricultural investment of sesame and cotton, the development of basic infrastructure would facilitate development, trade and living standards of the community.
- After infrastructure and facility development, the next issue for ecotourism development is its promotion and marketing so as to attract prospective visitors and to maximize benefits to the region.

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